



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Possibilities and Limitations of African  
Subversive Activity in Rhodesia

Summary

Africans have little capability today to foster subversive activity in Rhodesia which the Rhodesian government could not suppress. However, it may be possible in time for Africans to increase subversive activity or create disorders within Rhodesia sufficient to require a scale of repression by the government which in turn might cause a step up of pressure for British and/or African military intervention within Rhodesia.

1. Rhodesian Africans' current potential for subversion is limited by weak and divided nationalist organizations and by an absence of leadership. There is no indication that the rivalry which existed between the two nationalist organizations—ZAPU and ZANU—before UDI has been overcome since independence. Both ZAPU and ZANU are banned today, and their lack of strong organization before the ban was imposed has left the nationalists without any coordinated apparatus to conduct subversive activities. The few incidents of rock throwing and other minor disturbances which have occurred in Bulawayo and some other towns appear to be isolated acts of a small number of local militants. Moreover, all nationalist leaders with any large following or even reputation either have been detained by the government or have fled to Zambia and Tanzania. The estimated 2,000 persons restricted or detained by the government almost certainly include the most militant nationalist cadres.

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2. The mood of the African population before and since UDI has been far from revolutionary. The rural population has never been politically active, there are no reports that nationalist groups have ever tried to recruit them, and many rural dwellers are reportedly unaware of the UDI crisis and its implications. Large numbers of African laborers on European farms are Malawian and Zambian migrant workers who have not chosen to jeopardize their jobs by involvement in Rhodesian politics. Urban African workers have shown the same preference for jobs over politics. They have responded very poorly to the call for strikes from exiled nationalists and a few local intimidators. Most of those who did honor the strike appeal quickly returned to work when their employers threatened to dismiss all absentee workers. It is doubtful if further calls for action—such as stationing OAU troops in Zambia—would foster large-scale subversive activity by most Rhodesian Africans in the near future.

3. Rhodesian security forces have been quite effective in dealing with African disturbances and have extremely broad legal authority to suppress African dissidence.

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and it has been quick in effectively responding to post-UDI African incidents of rock throwing and other minor acts of violence.

4. The main staging area for infiltration of subversives from the outside is Zambia. Since Zambia became independent in October 1964, however, Rhodesian Africans, like refugees from other white-ruled territories, have been admitted on a restricted basis, provided they refrain from political activity. Paramilitary training on Zambian territory has officially been prohibited, as well as the transit of arms and sabotage materials. Some covert infiltration through Zambia of Rhodesian "freedom fighters" with arms and materials has continued, but the Zambian government has sought to tighten the actual control measures during recent months as UDI appeared imminent.

5. Since UDI, President Kaunda has continued these restrictions and urged Rhodesian refugees in Zambia to return home and engage in passive resistance. He has



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discouraged hopes that Zambia would provide a base for a Rhodesian African government-in-exile or provide material support for paramilitary activities. Although some influential militants in Zambia's cabinet and ruling political party apparently favor lifting the present control measures, it is unlikely that Kaunda would concur unless he abandons hope that Britain will actually suppress the Smith regime through sanctions or unilateral military action.

6. Any increase in subversive action which brought a particularly brutal response by the Rhodesian government, however, might sharply step up the pressures for intervention of British troops to restore order, especially if OAU governments threatened to intervene. OAU countries would probably make more serious threats to send troops in that eventuality than they are making today. Any OAU intervention would probably have the purpose of forcing British military intervention rather than in seriously engaging the Rhodesian forces.

7. It is possible in time for Rhodesian Africans to increase subversive activity.

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